

Self-defense

The charge made in Tuesday's Daily by several members of the Faculty Action Caucus (FAC) that CIA and FBI agents have routinely (and clandestinely) used University faculty members as information sources is only the latest in a three month-long series of surveillance-related revelations. Yet it is perhaps the most serious because faculty collusion with secretive intelligence agencies, as the FAC statement says, "threatens the principles of academic freedom to which the University is committed."

One of the most disturbing aspects of the allegation is that it was made by faculty members who say they are not engaged in classified work. It is based exclusively on knowledge of cooperation between agents and professors in areas open to the public.

Nearly all of these professors, however, are extremely reluctant to disclose specific information about their contacts with intelligence agents. They have allegedly been warned not to disclose their cooperation with agents to anyone. Yet they are doing work only in fields in which their knowledge is easily accessible.

If government intelligence agents feel compelled to keep their contacts secret with these faculty members, how must they conduct their work with other University staff members who are doing classified work of much more importance to the agencies? That is a difficult question to answer but a logical one to ask.

Faculty cooperation with intelligence agencies in the pursuit of devious, or at best obscure goals is repugnant behavior that demeans the purpose and threatens the integrity of the University.

A faculty member approached by an agent can assume that he has been subjected to some sort of political screening to determine if he is a safe prospect. What about professors who are haphazardly categorized as unreliable? Are they then considered potential subversives and placed under surveillance? And the faculty members who are asked to consent to "talks" with agents obviously must comply or risk being labeled "disloyal".

Such pressures are hard to resist.

The University has an obligation and a duty to protect itself from this kind of manipulation.

The special committee on surveillance on campus should recognize the importance of this problem and attempt to dissect it scrupulously. If only in self-defense, the University must act to protect itself from intelligence agencies that have run amuck.